



Wind River Search and Rescue

P.O. Box 1135 • Carson, Washington 98610

24-Hour Search Pack

Your 24-Hour Search Pack

Basic to your effectiveness as a Search and Rescue volunteer is the **24-Hour Search Pack**. Each volunteer must provide their own pack, and is responsible for its development and maintenance — and ensuring that it is present and ready for every mission.

WRSAR considers the 24-hour pack so important that members are required to bring them to all meetings and functions of the team.

The contents of your pack is up to you, but should at a minimum include the “**Ten Essentials**” (listed at right). Additional items (listed on back) are strongly recommended.

Your 24-hour pack must allow you to conduct search operations, and safely spend up to 24-hours in the field. Careful thought should be given to the equipment needed for search effectiveness, balanced with how much weight you are comfortably able to operate with.

The inventory of your 24-hour pack should be dynamic, not static; changing as circumstances (i.e. seasons) change. A process of ongoing evaluation is also important; as your experience grows, the items in your 24-hour pack should be adjusted accordingly.

Keep in mind that the 24-hour pack is just one (very important) element of your over-all “search package.” Clothing and footwear are also important parts of being an effective searcher... and probably most important, is your physical and mental readiness for whatever mission the team encounters!

The Ten Essentials

Map – Topographical maps are strongly recommended. The Wind River Ranger District map is an excellent choice for this area.

Compass – Compass know-how and an understanding of declination (the difference between a ‘magnetic’ and ‘true’ bearing) is important. This area’s declination is 18°–20° east.

Flashlight – Ensure you have an extra bulb & batteries. A head lamp is very useful.

Extra food & water – Carry food which requires little or no preparation (i.e. food bars). Sadly, there is no longer any uncontaminated surface water in the lower 48 states. Bring it with you, and be prepared to treat all other water.

Extra clothing – Include a hat & gloves with your extra clothing. Rain protection is a must, wool is always a good choice for layering. A space blanket or two is an ideal addition to any kit.

Firestarter – Must be waterproof. It is a good idea to have three options for firestarting (i.e. a lighter, waterproof matches & magnesium/flint). Practice makes all the difference.

Candle/fuel tablets – These are remarkably effective as hand warmers, a quick hot beverage, or for making a fire much easier to start.

Knife – The Swiss Army knife is an excellent, basic choice. The addition of a larger fixed blade knife is recommended for heavier tasks, i.e. gathering firewood and shelter building.

First Aid kit – Basic First Aid & CPR training should be considered a critical part of your First Aid kit. Latex gloves and a CPR shield are important parts of your kit.

Signaling device – At a minimum carry a whistle. Signal mirrors are very effective, as are smoke signals & flares (potential fire hazard).

Note: Some “Ten Essentials” lists replace signaling device with Sun-glasses... an item included in our additional items list on back.

Clothing

The fall/ winter (and even spring/ summer) climates of Skamania County and the surrounding areas present a challenge to those venturing out in it – especially search and rescue personnel who must operate in what are often less than ideal conditions.

Clothing is your first line of defense. It must be durable, comfortable to operate in, and layered for adaptability.

An uncovered head can radiate one half of your bodies heat production at 40° F. Nuff said.

Polypropylene or similar material makes a good first layer for wicking away perspiration. Often this layer is adequate during active search operations.

An insulating layer of wool, synthetic pile or fleece offers warmth even when wet.

The outer shell must be wind and water resistant. Breathable fabrics are effective, but expensive. Whatever is worn must be able to withstand the abuse found in the underbrush and rocks common to this area.

Your feet, being the basic means of transportation, deserve considerable attention. Sturdy hiking boots are necessary, as are a couple of layers of socks - including wool. An extra pair of dry socks in your pack may have a dramatic impact on your attitude in wet and cold conditions. Moleskin should be carried by everyone, and applied at the first signs of 'hot spots' which lead to blistering.

Gaitors are handy in most situations in the woods (regardless of season), by sealing all the brush, dirt, rocks, mud, rain and snow out of your boots.

Gloves are important for a number of reasons, and consideration should be given to carrying a few different types.

Experience is the best instructor... enjoy!

Other Recommended items

Shelter: Tarp, space blanket, poncho, tube tent, large plastic trash bag or a combination of these. Remember your clothing plays a major role in how comfortably you spend the night.

Grid Ribbon: Carry at least one roll. A biodegradable version is now on the market and deserves consideration.

Gloves: Leather work gloves are great for rope work, blackberry vine encounters and other times when durable protection is required. Polypropylene, wool or silk liners are effective for layering or by themselves. Fingerless gloves provide both protection and dexterity.

Hat: Helmets offer impact (& rain) protection as well as good visibility. A "Three Point" chin strap is the best. Various liners from cotton bandanas to wool stocking hats help to meet changing conditions. Some sort of balaclava (full head/face cover) is recommended.

Goggles: Eye protection is critical during helicopter operations, as well as hearing protection.

Rope: 20' of 1" nylon tubing is very useful, for tying harnesses, hasty rappelling, etc. "Parachute cord" or "550 cord" is a strong, versatile item to include in your pack.

Radio: Communications are critical to the success of missions. At least one radio per search team is required. Obtaining your Amateur Radio license is encouraged (but NOT required) as it will greatly increase your communications ability.

Sunglasses: UV protection of the eyes is especially important in snow conditions. Wearers of prescription eyewear should always have back-ups.

Machete: Useful for clearing a path for a stokes team, as well as building fires and shelters. A small folding camp saw also has value in fire and shelter building. Having one of each per team is recommended.

Sleeping pad: A light weight, closed cell foam pad is invaluable for sitting or kneeling on during breaks or fire building, etc. as well as for sleeping.

Other Items: Toilet paper in a plastic bag, pen & paper, insect repellent, sunscreen, general repair kit (duct tape, zip ties, etc.), binoculars, are all useful.



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Your 24 hour pack is your responsibility.

Other than the highly recommended 10 essentials, the way you equip yourselves is your decision. Do not let a lack of equipment compromise operations.

Start with the question:

What do I need to safely and effectively perform 24 hours of SAR operations?

Recognizing your unique equipment philosophy is a good place to start designing your pack. Are you a minimalist? Ever ready? Do you layer your gear ('Bat Belt')? Ultra light (may be spendy)?

Concern yourself with quality. The possibility of your, or someone else's, life depending on equipment performance cannot be dismissed.

A typical day pack is insufficient for SAR missions. 3500 – 4000+ cu (?) Pack must be durable and comfortable.

Layering equipment is effectively used by some with load bearing vests, fanny packs, etc.

The cost associated with outfitting yourself may be considerable... Army surplus stores, garage sales and other less expensive approaches are useful. Think long term. Upgrade gear as you are able.

As important as your equipment is your knowledge and familiarity of it. Practice with it, wear it, clean and repair it, and continually evaluate contents.

Recognize your physical limitations, do not over pack. Training with your pack greatly enhances your effectiveness. Every time you go hiking your 24 hour pack should be with you. Get used to it. Have it adjusted and ready to go.

Expect the unexpected!

Situational awareness!! Equip yourself to be able to adapt to changing operational needs.

Special teams may have additional required equipment.

Brainstorm the possibilities:

A team member's sprained ankle means we must now attend to first aid and safely spend the night...

You're in the 6th hour of a type 2 search and you just ran out of gas... and could use some water...

A sudden slip has left you up to your belly button in water... Of course it has rained all day anyway...

The weather recently and quickly went from sun to crud...

Mixing a rock with your flashlight just left you in the dark...

Ever heard of vine maple? Blackberry vines?

There is a 20' drop in your search path...



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24-Hour Search Pack Exam Questions

1. When must a WRSAR member have their 24 hour pack?
2. What should a searcher expect on a mission?
3. What factors impact your pack contents?
 - a. Type of mission
 - b. Weight
 - c. Cost
 - d. All of the above
 - e. None of the above
4. Is it appropriate to borrow equipment from team members?

Why?
5. List 5 of the 10 essentials shown on the handout.

What other things may effect the contents of your pack?

6. Beyond the 10 essentials what other items might a search include in their 24 hour pack?
7. What would you consider important to and effective searcher?
 - a. Appropriate clothing and footwear
 - b. Mental and physical preparedness
 - c. Complete 24 hour pack
 - d. All of the above
 - e. None of the above
8. What should your 24 hour pack allow you to do?
9. The inventory of your 24 hour pack should be
 - a. Static
 - b. DynamicExplain
10. When should you prepare for the next mission?

What should you do to get yourself ready?